THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM) : (a) and (b) A memorandum was submitted to Prime Minister by the Centre of Concern for Child Labour on 13th August, 1996. In the memorandum it was inter-alia demanded that the primary education be made justiciable, child labour banned immediately and the Government should announce the Policy on Child Labour and Compulsory Primary Education.

(c) The Common Minimum Programme (CMP) of the Government seeks to eliminate child labour from all occupations and industries and also making primary education a fundamental right. Government have initiated widespread consultation with a view to examining the financial, administrative and legal implications. The proposal has already been discussed in the Conference of State Education Ministers and State Education Secretaries, held on 9-10 August, 1996. The Conference recommended constitution of a committee under the Chairmanship of Union Minister for Human Resource Development (Education) to examine the various legal, financial, administrative and academic implications of the proposal to make free and compulsory elementary education a fundamental right. The committee has since been constituted.

As regards child labour, the National Policy on child Labour was formulated in 1987 which besides emphasizing on the enforcement of legal provisions, envisages focussing on general development programmes for the benefit of child labour and project-based plan of action in the areas of high concentration of child labour. The Government has also launched a massive programme in August, 1994 with a view to rehabilitating children working in hazardous occupations. Under the programme, an estimated 2 million children are to be withdrawn from work and put in special schools where they will be provided with non-formal education, vocational training, nutrition, stipends and health checks. So far 76 child labour projects have been sanctioned to cover 1.5 lakh children in child labour endemic states. These efforts will continue in the coming years in order to cover more working children under the programme.

Child Labour

5434. SHRI G. VENKAT SWAMY : Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware of the alleged use of child labour in the Carpet Industry;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have set up any machinery to check such incidents in that industry;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the steps taken by the Government to ensure that child labour is not used in that industry ?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM) : (a) to (e) Varanasi-Bhadohi-Mirzapur belt of the State of Uttar Pradesh is the most important carpet producing area in India. Children have been traditionally employed in carpet weaving in a clandestine manner, despite the prohibitory provisions in the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986. To control child labour in the carpet industry, the State Government of Uttar Pradesh has stepped up enforcement of the Child Labour related Laws in the carpet-belt in eastern Uttar Pradesh. State Government has informed that 9940 inspections have been made and 122 prosecutions have been filed in carpet belt during 1995. The Carpet Export Promotion Council (CEPC) has also introduced a system of compulsory registration-cum-membership for export of handmade carpets. CEPC has already started enforcing the Code of Conduct for prohibiting employment of children in carpet making. For the rehabilitation of children withdrawn from carpet industry, a National Child Labour Project is under implementation in the district of Mirzapur-Bhadohi for covering 2500 children. Funds have also been released to the project for a massive awareness generation campaign against the evils of child labour.

Direct Supply of Wheat to traders

5435. SHRI KASHI RAM RANA : Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state :

(a) whether offices of the Regional Manager in the States and the Chairman-cum-Managing Director of the Food Corporation of India have supplied wheat and rice directly to the traders instead of mill owners causing increase in prices of maida and flour during the months of July and August as a result thereof;

(b) if so, the quantity of wheat and rice supplied to Mills and traders, separately during the last six months State/Union Territory-wise;

(c) whether the Government have noticed some irregularities while supplying wheat and rice directly to the traders;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the action taken by the Government against the guilty officials ?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV) : (a) FCI sells wheat and rice under Open Market Sale Scheme (Domestic) to wholesalers, retailers, Roller Flour Mills, Chakkis, cooperatives, Super Bazar, Civil Supplies Corporations etc. The prices of maida and flour are determined by the flour milling industry.

(b) The information is not readily available in the FCI Hqs. It is being collected and will be placed on the Table of the House.